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Letter dated 2 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

During our presidency of the Security Council, in July 2015, New Zealand hosted an open debate on the peace and security challenges facing small island developing States. We are grateful to everyone who participated, with more than 70 speakers, representing the three regions of small island developing States and the broader membership of the United Nations, delivering statements on this important issue.

New Zealand, in its national capacity, has produced a non-paper providing a summary of some of the key themes and proposals raised by participants during the open debate (see annex). We hope that this is a useful contribution to ongoing discussions in the Council and other forums.

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gerard **van Bohemen**

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Annex to the letter dated 2 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Maintenance of international peace and security: peace and security challenges facing small island developing States

Security Council open debate

30 July 2015

Non-paper

Introduction

New Zealand, as President of the Security Council, convened an open debate on the peace and security challenges facing small island developing States on 30 July 2015.

The debate was an opportunity for small island developing States to highlight their specific challenges and vulnerabilities in the context of international peace and security and to exchange views with Security Council members and other Member States on how to effectively respond to them.

The open debate was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, Murray McCully. The following briefers addressed the Security Council:

(a) Secretary-General of the United Nations;

(b) Prime Minister of Samoa, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi;

(c) Prime Minister of Jamaica, Portia Simpson Miller;

(d) Minister of Finance of Seychelles, Jean-Paul Adam.

In total, 72 speakers, representing the three regions of small island developing States (Pacific, Caribbean and Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea) and the broader membership of the United Nations, delivered statements. Nineteen countries were represented at the level of Head of Government or the ministerial level.

The present non-paper, compiled by New Zealand in its national capacity, provides a summary of the key themes and proposals raised by participants during the open debate. It is not a complete or official record of the debate. It does not represent an endorsement of the themes and proposals identified by participants. A full record of the open debate is available on the website of the Security Council (see S/PV.7499).

Background

The United Nations classifies 52 countries and territories as small island developing States, with a combined population of more than 50 million people. This includes 37 Member States, one fifth of the total membership. Of these, only six have served on the Security Council in the past 25 years.[1] While the Council has

[1] Mauritius (1977/78 and 2001/02), Jamaica (1979/80 and 2000/01), Trinidad and Tobago (1985/86), Cabo Verde (1992/93), Guinea-Bissau (1996/97) and Singapore (2001/02).

occasionally pronounced on matters affecting small island developing States, it has not given serious, comprehensive and sustained consideration to the perspectives of those States.

Pursuant to the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway), the outcome document adopted at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, in 2014 (see resolution 69/15) States:

(a) Reaffirmed the importance of peace and security issues for small island developing States;

(b) Recognized the centrality of rising sea levels and other adverse impacts of climate change, which, for many small island developing States, represent the gravest of threats to their survival and viability;

(c) Recognized the negative effects that conflict, violence, trafficking in persons, drug trafficking, cybercrime and transnational organized crime can have on small island developing States and supported the efforts of those States to combat these phenomena;

(d) Noted the challenges facing small island developing States, in terms of limited resources and capacity, in responding effectively to multiple crises;

(e) Recognized the urgent need to enhance international cooperation and action to address the unique and particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States.

During the open debate, speakers commented that the timing, following closely after the commitments made by the international community in the Samoa Pathway, provided an opportunity for the Security Council to consider the unique peace and security challenges faced by small island developing States. This included re-examining traditional notions of peace and security in the context of a world faced with interconnected, complex and varied challenges and considering the role of the United Nations in effectively tackling these twenty-first century security challenges.

Peace and security challenges faced by small island developing States

During the open debate, speakers focused on the impact of the following challenges on the peace and security of small island developing States:

(a) Climate change and natural disasters;

(b) Transnational organized crime and piracy;

(c) Governance and exploitation of natural resources;

(d) Sustainable development and peace and security;

(e) United Nations peace and security initiatives.

Climate change and natural disasters

Speakers observed that the unique geographies and environments of small island developing States meant that they were at the front lines of the effects of climate change and weather-related disasters, which were projected to increase in

frequency and severity. Many such States were faced with rising sea levels and coastal erosion, which threatened their territorial integrity and, in some cases, their very existence. A single natural disaster could, owing to its disproportionate impact relative to the national capacities of those States, destroy vital infrastructure, displace a significant portion of their populations or have an impact on their sustainable economic growth trajectories. Climate change was also identified as a risk multiplier, exacerbating existing security and development challenges. Small island developing States were recognized for their leadership in the transition to renewable energy, in particular for proactively addressing the challenge of energy insecurity caused by dependence on expensive fossil fuels and for building resilience to energy insecurity.

Many speakers called for an ambitious and legally binding outcome from the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in December 2015. While small island developing States were particularly vulnerable to its impacts, climate change was recognized by many speakers as a global concern and a global responsibility. The importance of making resources available, including through the Green Climate Fund, to address and mitigate the impacts of climate change was emphasized, as was the need for capacity-building to enable small island developing States to gain access to climate financing.

Some speakers requested the Secretary-General to update his 2009 report to the General Assembly on climate change and possible security implications (A/64/350) and called for the threats posed by climate change to international peace and security to be included on the agenda of the Security Council. The 12 small island developing States in the Pacific region also called for the appointment of a special representative on climate and security with responsibility for analysing the projected security impacts of climate change. They also called for an assessment of the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to the impact of climate change.

Transnational organized crime and piracy

A key theme of the open debate was transnational organized crime and piracy, including the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, people, drugs and wildlife, as well as money laundering and cybercrime. Speakers stated that transnational criminal networks were increasingly targeting small island developing States because of their location on important trade routes, slow rates of economic growth and high rates of unemployment. Many such States had difficulties protecting their extensive exclusive economic zones and the integrity of their borders. Speakers emphasized that small island developing States were committed to combating illicit trade, including by scaling up efforts in border management, developing regional crime and security strategies and adhering to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Many small island developing States had joined multilateral counter-terrorism efforts and opposed the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. There was a call to strengthen the legal basis for international cooperation to counter transnational organized crime and piracy, and for increased technical assistance and capacity-building in this area.

Governance and exploitation of natural resources

A key theme was the challenge that the illicit exploitation of natural resources posed to small island developing States in obtaining a greater share of the income generated from their natural resources. This, in turn, undermined prospects for sustainable economic development and contributed to insecurity and instability. Small island developing States highlighted the value of oceans and fishery resources, with weak governance of the oceans being recognized as both a threat to territorial integrity and global security.

Speakers noted that illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing was a major threat, given the significance of fisheries for small island developing States, the economies of those States and the livelihoods of their people. Small island developing States often represented attractive targets for such fishing, given the policing challenges associated with large exclusive economic zones, relative isolation and high-value fishery resources. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing undermined the sustainability of valuable fishery resources, endangered food security and caused significant economic losses. In response, some small island developing States had adopted a regional approach to combat such fishing to facilitate information-sharing and avoid duplication of effort. To address the challenges posed by such fishing, small island developing States called for a greater and more equitable share of the sustainable development of natural resources (for example, a greater allocation of revenue from fishery catches), recognition of marine protected areas and the provision of technical support, including support to strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance systems.

Small island developing States sought greater cooperation at both the regional and international levels to address threats such as ocean acidification and marine debris. The second "Our Ocean" conference, to be held in Chile in October 2015, was identified as a forum to address the issues, including by reaching agreement on voluntary commitments on ocean acidification and marine pollution. Calls were made to enhance the awareness of small island developing States of, and capacity to benefit from, the legal regimes relevant to their vast maritime domains.

Sustainable development and peace and security

The link between sustainable development and peace and security was highlighted, with many speakers emphasizing that there could be no development without security or security without development. Speakers noted that small island developing States faced specific developmental challenges as a result of their small economies, narrow resource and economic bases and often high international debt levels. The lack of economic diversity made such States particularly vulnerable to global and external financial shocks and the potentially adverse impact of single investors on financial stability. It was noted that high levels of indebtedness could limit a country's fiscal capacity to finance development and respond to peace and security challenges.

Small island developing States emphasized that they were committed to the sustainable development of their islands and people. They had worked to ensure that their challenges were considered in negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and in the supporting financing mechanism, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. In support of their efforts, small island developing States called on the international community to

take a holistic view of peace and security and development and, in particular, to reinforce their national development efforts through capacity-building, technology transfer and innovation, improved access to markets and strategies to reduce debt levels.

United Nations peace and security initiatives

Small island developing States reaffirmed their role as active multilateral actors, committed to playing their part in global peace and security issues in a manner consistent with their national capacities. This included providing personnel to United Nations-mandated peace operations (both policing and military), participating in global frameworks and conventions and implementing Security Council resolutions. There were calls for the Council to prioritize engagement in preventative diplomacy to mitigate the risk of conflict or further escalation and to consider an ongoing focus on the peace and security challenges faced by small island developing States by devoting one day annually to their discussion. Options for optimizing the representation of small island developing States on the Council were also requested. The Council was called upon to play a greater role in ensuring multilateral system coherence to deliver as one, including on peace and security issues.

Genuine and durable partnerships

Building on the Samoa Pathway, there was strong and consistent emphasis throughout the open debate, by speakers from small island developing States and non-small island developing States alike, on the importance of genuine and durable partnerships to support small island developing States in addressing their peace and security challenges. For example, some speakers identified the need for new international partnerships between small island developing States and international donors in areas such as hydro, geothermal and wind power generation. Partnerships to supplement resources, fill gaps, enable innovative solutions and build the capacity of small island developing States at the national and regional levels could assist those States in delivering sustainable development and peace and security for their people.